



NDI Quarterly Report: January 1 to March 31, 2005

DRC: SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL PROCESS DEVELOPMENT DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD

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I. SUMMARY

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has grown increasingly tense as the end of the first two years of the transition approaches. The Congolese government is currently focused on the adoption of a new constitution, the continuing DDR program and the logistical preparations for the voter registration process. In April, the Senate submitted a revised constitutional draft to the National Assembly for adoption before it goes to a national referendum later this year. Though Congolese political and civic leaders agree that the electoral infrastructure and legal code are not in place, national elections originally scheduled for June 30, 2005, have not been officially postponed. The inevitable delay of the elections could destabilize the implementation of the peace accords as opposition parties accuse the government of failing to fulfill its mandate, with some parties and civil society groups calling for the government's resignation. Beyond the capital, continuing armed confrontations in the Ituri region underscore the country's precarious peace process.

Within this context, NDI is implementing a one-year program that seeks to improve prospects for a more inclusive and viable democratic transition and to increase women's political participation. During this quarter, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) conducted activities in several key areas, including: a) a political party forum in Kananga for 10 parties on employment policies; b) a two day-roundtable discussion for political party leaders to issue recommendations on the draft constitution; c) a meeting of the *Cadre de Concertation* for the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and political parties to develop and adopt a political party code of conduct; d) seminars for parliamentarians on gender and the new constitution; and e) a conference and continuing working sessions for political and civic leaders to encourage women and youth political leadership.

NDI adopted a dynamic program approach to better respond to opportunities to strengthen the transition process at the national and grassroots levels. For example, NDI organized parliamentary seminars to integrate gender parity in the draft constitutional and roundtable for political parties to analyze proposed legislation in response to emerging priorities. The Kananga political party forum also engaged national party leaders and local citizens in a

discussion on employment policies, and the *Cadre de Concertation* served as a venue for political parties to develop and adopt a code of conduct for the elections.

II. BACKGROUND

On March 18, the Senate submitted the draft constitution to the National Assembly, which must revise and adopt the legislation before it goes to a referendum later this year. Parliamentary debates on the constitutional draft remain contentious, particularly over the proposed age requirements for presidential candidates, the structure of state and the death penalty.

The government's continuing delays in adopting a new legal code and establishing an electoral framework mean strongly suggests that the transition will likely be extended beyond the expected two-year timeline. In response to accusations of failing to set up the logistics for the next elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) is releasing an emergency communication plan to inform the public about its achievements and next steps in the electoral process. In the meantime, some opposition groups, particularly those not represented in the transition institutions, are calling for the government's resignation in protest of its alleged inefficiency and lack of commitment to a peaceful transition process. Tensions between diverse political groups, both those in and outside the transition institutions, also persist on the 2005 budget. Most experts agree that the budget does not sufficiently consider social issues such as health care and education. They also express concerns about the discretionary funds allocated to the Presidency and suggest that the state revenue is over estimated.

The security situation in Eastern Congo continues to threaten the peace process. Recent fighting in North Katanga between uncontrolled Mai Mai troops and local militias reportedly killed 15 people and set 6 villages on fire. The fighting forced hundreds of people to flee their villages in the Ituri region for more secure areas. The brutal killing of nine UN peacekeepers led the UN to temporarily disrupt its vital humanitarian assistance to displaced civilians in eastern Congo, making it the most neglected humanitarian emergency in the world.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

I. Technical and Logistical Assistance to Congolese Political Parties

A. Kananga political party forum

On February 18, 2005, NDI conducted a regional political party forum on employment policies in Kananga, capital of the of Kasai Occidental province. The forum is the ninth in a series of activities that target each of the country's 11 provinces and that brings together 10 political parties to discuss an identified issue of local importance with citizens at the grassroots level. Over 240 representatives from civil society groups, local party chapters and government officials participated in the Kananga forum.

In the lead up to the forum, NDI consulted political and civic leaders in Kananga to generate support for the forum and assess political parties' presence in the province. Based on

these discussions, NDI retained 10 political parties for the forum and confirmed the relevance of the theme “employment policies” for the province where the job market is limited to a few diamond mining companies and a local brewery¹. NDI also conducted a working session in Kinshasa on communication and message development strategies for delegates of the selected political parties to help enhance their message delivery skills and encourage them to work with their local branches when developing their employment policy in the Kasai Occidental.

The Forum started with welcome speeches by USAID Representative Maitre Ambroise Kamukini, NDI Senior Program Officer Richard Ferland and the governor of the Province, who urged participants to be tolerant of the 10 party messages. Each party representative then presented a 10-minute message on employment policies. After the presentations, participants engaged political party leaders in a Question and Answer session moderated by NDI Senior Program Officer Julie Leonard. Initial questions focused on the electoral process, showing citizens’ frustrations with the stalled peace transition, but the debate was redirect to employment topics, including: the new dam project; ways to protect workers’ rights; how to help street children access jobs; and an assessment of political parties’ efforts to create jobs in the province since their participation in the transitional government.

Following are some of the parties’ employment policy proposals: create new training programs for existing industries in the province; entrepreneurship and micro-finance skills building; retrain and redirect the workforce toward new sectors of activities with more job opportunities; develop and support private sector imitative and new development projects such as the Katende Hydro electrical plants in Western Kasai and Bandundu. All message presentations stayed within the 10 minute limit; NDI noted a substantial improvement in the performance of the leaders who had participated in previous forums. Women also contributed to the debate and applauded the only woman party delegate who encouraged them to participate in the political process. NDI videotaped the proceedings of the forum and will make copies of the video available to interested political party representatives at all CEPPS Democracy Resource Centers.

B. Technical assistance for key legislation: *Roundtable discussions on the draft Constitution*

From February 24 to 25, 2005, NDI organized a political party roundtable in Kinshasa to study key provisions of the draft Constitution. The objectives of the roundtable were to: 1) promote a wider debate among Congolese political actors on the content of the proposed Constitution; 2) harmonize political views on pertinent clauses of the draft Constitution and; 3) formulate and publicize recommendations to be addressed to the Transitional National Assembly’s Political,

Participants to the roundtable on the draft constitution included:

- 18 women;
- 26 Political party presidents
- 19 Members of the DRC’s Parliament, and
- the Vice Governor of Kinshasa

¹ The selected parties are: Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction de la démocratie (PPRD), Rassemblement des Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC), Démocratie Chrétienne (DC), Forces Novatrices pour l’Union et la Solidarité (FONUS) Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Sociale (UDPS), [0] Parti Démocrate et Social Chrétien (PDSC Conseil National Republicain pour le Progres (CNRP), Parti Democratique Socialiste (PDS), Forces du Futur.

Administrative and Judicial Committee (PAJ). A total of 107 leaders from 50 political parties participated in the event.

The first day consisted of three presentations on key constitutional issues followed by a productive question-and-answer session. The presentations were made by Maitre Mory Fanny, NDI's legislative expert; Dr. Felix Ulloa, NDI/Haiti Resident Director and a former Senator and political activist from El Salvador; and Maitre Jean-Louis Essambo, a prominent Congolese constitutionalist. Me. Fanny's presentation focused on the organizational structures of a state (i.e. unitary versus federal or confederate state) and the fundamental power sharing principles of each system. Mr. Esambo offered a comprehensive overview of DRC's constitutional history and government systems and Dr. Ulloa discussed constitutional mechanisms for good governance and conflict mitigation.

On the second day, participants broke into two working groups to develop recommendations to improve the draft constitution. The first group discussed the organizational structure of the state and power sharing mechanism, while the second group identified constitutional mechanisms to encourage democratic development, accountable governance, the consolidation of the peace process, and protection of human rights. The recommendations of the two working groups were later discussed and adopted in a plenary session. On March 4, 2005, a delegation composed of 40 party leaders accompanied by NDI staff presented the adopted recommendations to Philomene Omatuku, Vice-President of the National Assembly.

C. CEPPS Democracy Resource Centers

The CEPPS Democracy resource centers continue to serve as a neutral space where political parties can access information, exchange ideas and conduct internal and inter-party activities.

In addition to daily use of IT and library resources, NDI's partners also participated in inter-party discussions that targeted youth political party members. Participants first viewed a videotape of the Matadi Political party forum and then engaged in a debate on the forum topic, fiscal and custom policy. By viewing the forum, youth political party members learned more about their parties' messages and the importance of constituency relations.

Number of participants to the multiparty discussions per resource center:

- Kinshasa: 60, including 42 women
- Lubumbashi: 64, including 13 women
- Kikwit: 58, including 16 women

II. Legislative Strengthening: technical support to the PAJ Committee of the National Assembly

Workshop for PAJ Members

From February 24 to 25, the PAJ committee of the National Assembly organized a workshop at the CEPPS resource center in Kinshasa to help its members understand key aspects of the draft Constitution. Mory Fanny, NDI's legislative expert, helped the PAJ develop the workshop methodology, identified outside panellists and provided logistic assistance. The

workshop consisted of five presentations followed by question and answer sessions. The panelists presented on the following subjects:

- Types of States, presented by Dr. Ndeshyo Rurihose, law professor at the University of Kinshasa and Vice President of the PAJ.
- Political Regime/System, presented by Ekombe Mpetshi Toussaint, Lawyer and member of the PAJ.
- Balance of Power Between State Institutions, presented by Mory Fanny, NDI expert
- Electoral Systems and Types of Ballots, presented by Ferdinand Kapanga, expert for the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES).
- The Status of the Opposition, presented by Denis Tabiana, member of the PAJ

During the PAJ debates on the Constitution, parliamentarians demonstrated a better understanding of electoral processes and the legislatures sanction powers.

III. Partnership building between political parties and key transitional institutions

Consultation meetings between Political Parties and the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI)

On March 9, 2005, NDI, in collaboration with the CEI and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), convened the fourth meeting of the *Cadre de Concertation* between the CEI and Congolese political parties at the *Stade des Martyrs* in Kinshasa. The meeting brought together leaders of the CEI and 163 delegates from 108 political parties. The goal of the event was to develop and adopt a Code of Conduct for political parties during the electoral period.

The meeting began with a presentation by Honore Guié, senior advisor to the Electoral Unit of the United Nations' peacekeeping mission (MONUC), and former president of the Ivorian National Electoral Commission on the advantages of political party codes of conduct. After the presentation, participants split in three working groups to analyze and amend a draft code of conduct developed by the CEI. Participants agreed on a version that will be reviewed and signed by each political party before it is disseminated to local party chapters. NDI is currently consulting youth wings of its partner parties to help them share the code with other party members once it is adopted.

IV. Activities on Increasing Women's Political Participation

Seminar to validate previous recommendations of women's groups

From January 21 to 22, three groups of women leaders from civil society and political parties--*Women for the Peace Process in Africa (WOPPA)*, *Reseau des femmes africaines Ministres et Parlementaires (REFAMP -DRC local section)* and *Dynamique des Femmes Politiques (DYNAFEP)*-organized a joint seminar to validate recommendations issued from previous activities organized by the three organizations and to strengthen participants' understanding of the electoral systems and process. Upon their request, NDI provided technical assistance to the groups to help refine the objectives, terms of references, and methodology of

the seminar. The activity was jointly sponsored by *Droits et Democratie* and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). At the end of the seminar, participants adopted their recommendations and created an Ad Hoc committee of nine members to lobby political leaders on the final recommendations.

Gender awareness seminar for parliamentarians

From March 2 to 4, NDI assisted the *Reseau Genre du Parlement*² in organizing three one-day seminars to sensitize parliamentarians on gender issues and encourage them to defend women's social, economic and political rights during the legislative debates on the draft constitution. NDI provided technical and financial assistance to the Reseau to help them develop a training methodology, identify trainers and develop clear terms of reference. The three seminars reached 225 parliamentarians (150 men and 75 women) in advance of their debate on the draft constitution.

The opening ceremony was launched with speeches by the Third Vice President of the National Assembly, USAID Democracy & Governance Director Katherine Nichols and NDI Senior Program Officer Julie Leonard. The seminars were then organized in three phases: a panel presentation; working groups, and adoption of recommendations from the working groups.

A panel of three presentations introduced parliamentarians to ways to protect women's rights in legal texts and lessons learned from parliamentarians in other countries. Presenters included: Augusta Angelucci, Senior Gender Advisor at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); Odette Boly, from UNDP, and Miranda Tabifort from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

During the question and answer session, male parliamentarians raised numerous concerns regarding quotas but also invited women to take more political initiative. Participants then split into four working groups to analyze the recommendations from the January roundtable organized by WOPPA, DYNAFEP and REFAMP. A member of parliament was asked to facilitate each working group and engage parliamentarians to debate the recommendations in order to reach consensus. After the group discussions, parliamentarians met in a plenary session to present the conclusions of the working sessions and adopt a list of recommendations that they agreed to defend during the debates on the constitutional draft. At the end of the seminars, the parliamentarians developed and agreed to defend the following recommendations during the legislative debates on the constitutional draft:

- Integrate the concept of parity in the constitution;
- Integrate language in the constitution to protect women's political rights;
- Add the word "women" after the word "men" throughout the text of the constitution as to make it more gender neutral;

The Senate, the more conservative --of the two bodies of legislature--adopted the principle of parity in the draft Constitution on March 10, 2005. The text is now being debated in the PAJ Committee of the National Assembly.

² The Reseau Genre Parlementaire is a group of male and female senators and deputies who are committed to protecting equal political, economic and cultural rights for men and women in the DRC. The Reseau is headed by Honorable Marie Bapu, a women senator. These seminars were its first activity since created in 2003.

- Raise the adult age from 14 to 18 for women;
- Sensitize men and women on gender; and
- Provide civic education training for women at the local level

The Third Vice President of the National Assembly closed the seminars by encouraging parliamentarians to defend these recommendations during the debates and to prioritize gender in their legislative work. Specifically, the Senate adopted the concept of parity in the constitution, paving the way for women to lobby for concrete measures such as quotas, better representation in government bodies, inclusion of gender sensitive provisions in future legislation, and girls education.

Conference on Women and Youth Political Participation

On March 11, 2005, NDI organized an international *Conference on Women and Youth Political Participation* at the Centre Nganda in Kinshasa. The Conference had three objectives:

- a) To sensitize party leaders on the importance of women and youth participation in civil society organizations and in political parties
- b) To develop strong and practical measures to guarantee youth and women participation in the decision making process of political parties and to ensure their mobilization for the electoral process
- c) To develop a national work plan to reinforce women and youth political participation

The conference started with four presentations by Augusta Angelucci (UNDP) on “Gender and development policies”, Eve Bazaiba (WOPPA) on “the role of women in the peace process and in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue”, Mrs. Amy Smythe (MONUC) on “Lessons learned through inclusive democracy with women and youth participation” and Maitre Canada Lokwa, from DDF on the “The role of youth in strengthening democracy”.

The Conference attracted 122 participants including:

- 40 political party leaders;
- 30 women political party association leaders;
- 30 members of women civic associations;
- 15 members from youth associations; and
- Five (5) representatives of the international community.

During afternoon working group sessions, party identified strategies to promote women and youth political participation. Civil society participants developed a draft work plan with concrete actions that women and youth political and civic leaders can undertake together to encourage broader participation. Political party representatives present during the event also prepared a statement in favour of women’s participation that was adopted by the participants. A *comité de suivi (follow-up committee)* comprising women and youth from political parties and civil society has met more than six times since the conference to finalize the action plan and integrate themes of non-violence and political tolerance in the declaration. The comité is also outlining a mutlipartisan lobbying strategy to encourage party leaders to sign the declaration.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective: Strengthen the capacity of political parties through technical trainings

- NDI's workshops on communication and message development techniques and strategies enhanced the capacity of party leaders to effectively research, develop, and communicate concrete political messages. Leaders applied techniques and advice shared during the training to deliver messages within the allocated time limit. After the Kananga forum, the delegate of Forces du Future said, "I felt more comfortable in my message delivery than during my first performance in the Matadi forum. The Matadi forum launched my political career and provided me with an opportunity to address a large audience while learning how to respond to questions and critiques regarding my party."
- The Kananga forum enabled local party members to receive more information on their political party's platform and structure. For example, the FONUS party leader from Kinshasa, who serves as the party's youth wing leader, was able to provide members with more information on youth issues in the party. His message during the forum also focused on the importance of training youth for jobs.
- Political party members in Kisangani, Kikwit, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi will have access to party platforms and messages via videos of the Kananga forum that will be available in each of the CEPPS Democracy Resource Centers. The tapes can be used as resources and training material.
- Political parties have adopted the first draft of a code of conduct that would govern their actions and behaviour in the lead up, during and after elections.
- As a result of the Kananga forum, the Democratie Chretienne party established a new party leadership in the province of Kasai Occidental. The forum created an incentive for the party president in Kinshasa to address a long running problem with the party leadership in the Kasai. Although members of the executive committee had tried to convince the leader to take action in the past, the leadership problems in the Kasai were not a high priority. The forum permitted a member of the executive committee to travel to the Kasai to resolve the issues and strengthen communication channels between Kasai party branch and Kinshasa leaders.
- Some political party leaders from Kinshasa met with their Kasai base for the first time and learned more about local problems and challenges facing their membership base. Only three of the 10 political leaders from Kinshasa had been to Kananga in the past two years.

Objective: Facilitate the implementation of a legal framework for a democratic transition to representative and accountable government.

- Following a two-day roundtable discussions on the constitution, political parties made a set of concrete recommendations on how to improve the draft constitution. Their recommendations were presented to the Vice-President of the National Assembly ahead of the Assembly's debate on the draft constitution.

- The gender awareness seminar for parliamentarians increased senators' understanding of the need to promote and protect women's rights in general, and their political participation in particular.
- The Ad Hoc committee created during the validation seminar has organized two peaceful marches to ask political leaders to include the principle of gender parity in the constitution and raise awareness on the need to enhance the participation of women in the political process. The marches were held at a conference on the transition process sponsored by the World Bank, where banners calling for greater women participation were displayed and a statement from the women was read, and at the National Assembly, where a set of recommendations issued at the Seminar was handed to the president of the institution.
- The Senate, the more conservative of the two legislative bodies, agreed to insert the concept of Parity in the draft constitution on March 10, as a direct result of the lobbying efforts of participants to the Seminar on Gender.

Objective: Broaden citizen interest and enhancing public participation during the transition period

- The Kananga forum provided citizens with the first opportunity to participate in a multiparty activity. Citizens explained that the forum helped to consolidate multiparty systems in the region and provided them with an opportunity to learn about new political parties. As an example, one participant asked *Forces du Futurs* to justify his party's presence in the province and provide information on the party's history and local office contact.
- The Kananga forum gave citizens an opportunity to express frustration and ask questions about the transition process. Although the theme of the Kananga forum was employment policies, citizens diverted from the debate for a short period and voiced their expectations and concerns regarding the transition process. These questions helped political leaders from Kinshasa gauge local populations' attitudes on elections and economic progress.
- The RCD political party leader reached out to women across all party lines at the Kananga forum, encouraging them to take part in the political process. The women responded with applause and many, regardless of their party affiliation, met with the RCD leader to ask her how they could overcome continuing marginalization in the Kasai.
- More than 40 women out of 240 participants participated in the Kananga forum and the question and answer session. Their participation was among the highest in comparison to other forums, partly because NDI had encouraged political parties to give five of their 10 entry tickets to the forum to women party members. The forum moderator also encouraged women to ask questions during the Q&A session.
- During the International Women and Youth Conference, participants drafted and adopted a memorandum aimed at enhancing women and youth political participation. Also, representatives of political parties to the conference made a strong statement in support of

the objectives of the conference, and an Ad Hoc Committee was created to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the memorandum adopted at the forum.

- The multi-party *Comité de Suivi* created during the international conference for women and youth political participation has developed a workplan and is in the process of crafting a lobbying strategy to pressure political leaders to create more leadership opportunities for women and youth. On February 4, 2005, the Comité held a press conference at the Kinshasa CEPPS resource center to report on its activities and evaluate the impact of its advocacy efforts at the National Assembly. The event was widely covered by all major broadcasting and print news media outlets represented in Kinshasa.

V. EVALUATION

During this reporting quarter, NDI launched the third component of its program to support women and youth political participation. The three activities conducted under this program served to enhance prospects for better collaboration and coordination between women and youth activists from political parties and civic organizations across the board. For instance, the Seminar to validate previous recommendations of women's groups enabled three dynamic organizations to compile their recommendations on how to promote the status of women, and establish a common workplan to jointly advocate for their implementation. The seminar for parliamentarians on gender and the International Conference on women and youth political participation led to the creation of a multipartisan group of youth and women activists that are developing lobbying strategies to pressure political leaders to create leadership opportunities for women and youth.

NDI also continued to strengthen the capacity of political parties to better organize and reach out to new sectors. The Kananga political party forum and the follow-up debates on the Matadi forum organized in NDI's resource centers gave parties an opportunity to consult local populations and better understand their responsibilities towards constituents. Through the seminar and roundtable discussions on the Constitution, NDI helped transitional institutions such as the CEI, the National Assembly and political parties, to contribute to the elaboration of a new legal framework for the country's next government system.

A. Building a more representative and competitive multiparty system through political party capacity building.

The Kananga forum provided political parties with an opportunity to strengthen their membership structures, develop issue-based political party messages and better understand local concerns during a critical phase of the transition process. As the initial deadline for the end of the peace transition approaches, the political debate has become increasingly tense, particularly in areas where the PPRD and UDPS are in competition. Opportunities for constructive and issue-based dialogue, such as the forum, serve to dissipate tensions and provide citizens with a space to express their concerns and demand accountability from party leaders in the implementation of the peace accords.

The Kananga forum also helped leaders from competing parties to engage in tolerant dialogue and find common ground on certain issues. During the question and answer session, party leaders acknowledged that they have similar viewpoints on ways to create jobs or to safeguard voter rights. For example, when one question was addressed to all 10 party leaders, many of them explained that they agreed with the answers that had already been given. Also, party leaders and forum participants agreed to respect a code of conduct for the forum and expressed great satisfaction on the level of tolerance and respect shown by all of the participants during the forum. In follow-up consultations with NDI, citizens praised the forum for consolidating multi-partyism in the Kasai and proving that political parties can engage in constructive politics.

In addition, political parties took unprecedented steps in developing a code of conduct during the meeting of the *Cadre de Concertation*. Given the historic distrust and animosity between political actors, a mechanism such as the code of conduct can serve to prevent false accusations, verbal and/or physical attacks and other forms of violence during campaign and election periods. If well disseminated, it can also dissuade party members from unfounded rejection of election results. Although the code still has to be signed by individual parties, it constitutes a positive gain in the lead up to the elections and demonstrates parties' desire for a credible, secure, and transparent election process. The CEI's participation in the *Cadre de Concertation* suggests that political institutions are also committed to creating conflict mitigation tools and mechanisms ahead of the electoral period. The parties' broad participation in the *Cadre de Concertation* continues to demonstrate its usefulness in making the DRC democratization process more inclusive.

B. Facilitate the implementation of a legal framework for a democratic transition to representative and accountable government.

The roundtable discussions on the constitution offered an opportunity for political parties to gain a better understanding of constitutional issues and make recommendations to the National Assembly. The panel presentations helped raise participants' awareness about basic components of constitutions such as different types of state structures and how the power is shared between institutions in the diverse options. The level of participation during the question and answer sessions and the relevance of the questions posed clearly demonstrated that Congolese political parties were eager to participate at all levels of their country's democratic process. More importantly, the roundtable enabled participants to make informed recommendations on how to improve specific provisions of the draft constitution. At the end of the second day, participants were able to make clear recommendations that could be sent to the National Assembly. In addition, representatives from the CEI and members of civil society and parliament took part in the discussions, thereby giving the recommendations more legitimacy and political weight for their integration in the constitutional draft.

NDI's program contributed to the integration of language for women's rights and gender in DRC's new legal framework. With NDI's assistance, Congolese men and women reached across political lines to educate parliamentarians on gender and lobby them to defend gender parity in the constitutional draft. Despite the parliamentarians' engagement and interest in the debates on gender issues, NDI observed that women and men legislators lack basic knowledge

on electoral processes that could promote women's access to elected office. Throughout the seminars, parliamentarians had little understanding of blocked party candidate lists; many thought that blocked lists are closed and anonymous so that voters only see the name of the party rather than the candidate names. NDI noted that parliamentarians refused to consider ways to reform political parties and create mechanisms in the candidate nomination process that could favor women at the top of the candidate lists. Their distrust of political parties and belief that candidates will have more opportunities to access elected office by running as independents impeded a constructive and informed debate. This problem is largely due to the current legislative composition, whereby 25 percent of the current parliament is composed of civil society leaders and many of the parliamentarians that were nominated under the three other factions--PPRD, RCD and non-violent opposition--have little political experience within these parties or in a democratic system as a whole. Candidates for the next elections therefore believe that they will have more success if they run under their own name. Political party training, education campaigns for parliamentarians on the electoral law and efforts to bring parties closer to the population, such as NDI forums, are important mechanisms to address these issues and build more trust between the populations and political parties.

NDI also sought party leaders' support for capacity building activities to empower women and youth participation in political parties. During the International Conference, representatives from political parties developed a declaration of through which, the committed to take concrete measures in creating leadership opportunities for women and youth within party structures. To encourage greater solidarity between women and youth from diverse political backgrounds, NDI also helped conference participants create a Committee that is developing a lobbying strategy to pressure party leaders in signing and implementing the declaration. The Institute has begun to meet with youth and women party members in its resource centers to inform them of the declaration and the lobbying efforts, as well as to mobilize them to take more initiative and push for reforms for their increased participation in local party chapters.

During this quarter, the PAJ committee of the National Assembly has begun to strengthen its members' capacity to effectively analyze provisions of draft legislations. The PAJ president's agreement to democratize NDI's assistance to the entire committee is a tremendous gain, given his initial reluctance to share the Institute's resource persons with other parliamentarians. By identifying the training needs for its members and requesting technical support from specialized organizations, the PAJ is demonstrating its commitment to better perform in conducting the committee's business.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the next reporting period, NDI plans to conduct the following activities:

- Political Party Forums in the Kindu and Goma regions;
- Inauguration of the Kisangani CEPPS Democracy resource Center
- Series of political party trainings on organizational structure and membership development
- Convene meeting of the cadre de concertation between the CEI and political parties, and launch similar meetings between the CEI and women and youth.
- Capacity building workshops for women and youth activists

- Projection of the video tape of the Kindu and possibly the Goma forum follow-up by inter-party debates among youth leaders in each resource center.